

VZCZCXYZ0003
RR RUEHWEB

DE RUEHIN #1268 2380945
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 250945Z AUG 08
FM AIT TAIPEI
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 9834
INFO RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 8558
RUEHHK/AMCONSUL HONG KONG 0005

UNCLAS AIT TAIPEI 001268

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DEPARTMENT PASS AIT/WASHINGTON

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [OPRC](#) [KMDR](#) [KPAO](#) [TW](#)
SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: U.S.-CHINA-TAIWAN RELATIONS

¶1. Summary: Taiwan's major Chinese-language dailies focused their August 23-25 news coverage on the investigation into former President Chen Shui-bian's money laundering case; on Taiwan Taekwondo athlete Su Li-wen's show of sportsmanship by sustaining injuries in a competition and fighting up to the last minute; and on U.S. Democratic presidential candidate Barack Obama's selection of Senator Joseph Biden as his vice presidential running mate. Local media also paid close attention to Chen Chih-chung, Chen Shui-bian's son, and his wife Huang Jui-ching's whereabouts in the United States and speculated on whether the couple would return to Taiwan. [Ed. Note: they have since returned.]

¶2. In terms of editorials and commentaries, an editorial in the pro-unification "United Daily News" discussed the development of cross-Straits relations in the wake of Beijing Olympics. The article urged Beijing to change itself in terms of its image in cross-Straits relations, its thinking and inner cultivation so as to move toward the state of real 'co-existence' with Taiwan. A "United Daily News" analysis discussed President Ma Ying-jeou's strategy in terms of Washington-Beijing-Taipei ties after having been office for 100 days. The article said Ma is hoping to put Taiwan in an indispensable position in such a strategic triangle. End summary.

A) "Cross-Straits Relations in the Wake of Beijing Olympics"

The pro-unification "United Daily News" [circulation: 400,000] editorialized (8/24):

"... In the wake of the Beijing Olympics, the major variable affecting the relations across the Taiwan Strait will be the race between the two sides in terms of their 'political systems'; such a situation already existed before the Beijing Olympics, and it will do so after the Beijing Olympics. Mainland China is an autocracy, while Taiwan is a democracy. What is referred to here [in the article] is exactly the interaction between these two political systems. Such interaction can be moral competition indicating that 'democracy excels totalitarian authority' on the one hand, and it can be a contest over efficiency, showing that 'autocracy outrivals democracy.' ... Beijing's autocracy can carry off an Olympic Games that everyone marvels at, but the goal it pursues ought to be an ultimate state where democracy will [prevail] and replace autocracy. ...

"Before the Beijing Olympics, the landmark of Beijing was the Forbidden City, but after the Olympics, Beijing's landmark is the Bird's Nest. This is not only a change in its image but also a change in its way of thinking, which should also give impetus to changes in terms of its inner cultivation in the future. In the wake of the 2008 Olympics, the Beijing authorities should encounter changes in terms of its image in cross-Straits relations, in thinking, and in its inner cultivation and truly move toward a state of 'co-existence and win-win situation' [with Taiwan]."

B) "Ma Ying-jeou's Style of Washington-Beijing-Taipei Strategy Taking Shape"

Journalist Stella Wang said in the pro-unification "United Daily News" [circulation: 400,000] (8/25):

"... Previously, the strategic triangular relationship among Washington, Beijing and Taipei has constantly been in a dilemma where one aspect is being taken care of while the other is missing. Now that Washington-Taipei ties have become stabilized again, President Ma Ying-jeou quickly attended to cross-Straits relations by tossing off issues regarding offering landing visas [to Chinese tourists] and the building of a bridge between Kinmen and China's city of Xiamen (Amoy) -- a move aimed at creating an ambiance of peace, reconciliation and cooperation across the Taiwan Strait. Having assumed office for 100 days, Ma is hoping to put Taiwan in an indispensable position in the triangle formed by the United States, China and Taiwan and in the meantime setting the tone for his cross-Straits policy.

"While extending a goodwill gesture [to Beijing], Ma should also firmly demonstrate Taiwan's determination in defending itself, which must not become a kind of lip service but should be concretely showcased in [the government's] national defense budget and arms procurement items. More importantly, Taiwan's national troops must truly feel Ma's enthusiasm and determination in attaching great importance to the island's national defense, and the small-sized but powerful new national troops will be [Taiwan's] strongest reliance for peace talks across the Taiwan Strait."

WANG